



# Fact Sheet:

## Draft Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan

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### What is the *Draft 2008 Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan*?

The *Draft Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan* is a document that presents a framework for protecting and improving water quality in Coeur d'Alene Lake. The stated goal of the plan is to:

*...protect and improve lake water quality by limiting basin-wide nutrient inputs that impair lake water quality conditions, which in turn influence the solubility of mining-related metals contamination contained in lake sediments.*

The plan was developed jointly by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), with assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The plan reflects agreement between the Tribe and DEQ concerning the current state of lake water quality and lake management goals, objectives, and strategies.

In 1983 the EPA listed the Bunker Hill Mining and Metallurgical Complex on the National Priorities List under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), often referred to as Superfund. Although the lake is within the Superfund site, it is not included in EPA's cleanup plans. EPA acknowledged that a revision of the *1996 Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan*, developed locally outside of the federal CERCLA process and actively funded and implemented, may appropriately address contaminants in the lake. The possibility of future action by EPA still exists, if plan implementation is not successful.

The plan is the product of extensive efforts to understand and address key interests of local, state, federal, and tribal governments, whose partnership is critical for future success. It is also the product of efforts to begin partnerships with the business community, environmental groups, and individual citizens to promote education, understanding, and support for effective lake management.

### Why Was the *Draft 2008 Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan* Developed?

The plan was developed to provide a road map to protect and improve water quality in Coeur d'Alene Lake. Past mining activities in the Silver Valley deposited millions of metric tons of metals into the lake, including lead, zinc, and cadmium. These metals now reside on the lake bottom, with more coming into the lake from the Coeur d'Alene River each day. If these metals are not carefully managed, they can present risks to the health of the lake, as well as to human health and downstream environments.

Coeur d'Alene Lake is the homeland of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and their current reservation is located around its southern half. The lake is the heart of the local community and it is an economic catalyst for northern Idaho and eastern Washington. These factors all underscore the need to protect and improve lake water quality.

Water quality in the lake has generally improved since the mid-1970s. Recent monitoring has shown, however, that southern lake waters have declined in quality since the completion of a U.S. Geological Survey study in 1991 and 1992. Since the mid-1970s, the era of large-scale upstream mining-related activities has tapered off, environmental cleanup has begun in the Silver Valley, and environmental regulations have been implemented throughout the basin. The challenge today is to ensure that human activities are conducted in ways that will protect the lake's water quality.

## What's In the Plan?

The plan provides a historical view of the lake and a summary of the current status of lake water quality. It defines an overall water quality goal and outlines objectives and strategies for improving lake water quality, including specific actions and milestones. To meet its goal, the plan describes five main courses of action:

1. Continue to conduct **water quality monitoring** and use computer modeling to increase scientific understanding of how pollutants move into and within the lake.
2. Conduct a basin-wide **nutrient source inventory** to help set implementation priorities.
3. Use the “**management action tables**” in the plan to coordinate and evaluate existing and future water quality related programs and activities.
4. **Educate** the community to increase awareness of lake conditions and promote stewardship.
5. Implement **nutrient reduction projects**.

The scope of the plan includes the entire Coeur d’Alene Lake basin. The metals, nutrients, and other pollutants in the lake are the result of activities that occur around the lake, in upland areas, and along tributary waters. The entire basin must be included to effectively address the issues that affect water quality.

The plan reflects the shared view of the Tribe and DEQ that a collaborative, adaptive, and data-driven approach is the best option to manage water quality in Coeur d’Alene Lake. The adaptive management model will use data collected during routine monitoring to guide management decisions. The data will help determine the need for additional actions and the success of actions already taken. This, in turn, will allow implementation strategies to be adapted as necessary, to help ensure limited funding is spent appropriately.

The key to managing the metals in the lake is to keep them stable and insoluble on the lake bottom. This is accomplished by maintaining dissolved oxygen in bottom waters. To do this, it is necessary to limit the amount of excess nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) entering the lake. Nutrients support the growth of plants in the lake; when the plants die, they settle to the lake bottom and use oxygen in the process of decaying. Nutrients come from many sources; the plan recommends a nutrient source inventory to determine exactly where they are coming from and which sources contribute the greatest quantities.

The management action tables in the plan list many ways to limit nutrients entering the lake to protect water quality. Monitoring results, funding availability, staff time, community support, and management decisions will affect which of these actions will ultimately be implemented. Some of the actions listed in the tables have already been initiated and/or implemented.

## What Is Happening Now?

The plan is in final editing and will soon be available for public comment (watch the DEQ and Tribe Web sites for comment opportunities; see front page for URLs). When the public comment period ends, all comments will be reviewed and considered for incorporation into the plan. In addition, a separate “response to comments” document will be developed that will contain all comments received and a response to each.

## What Will Happen Next?

Once public comments have been received, reviewed, and incorporated as appropriate, a final *2008 Coeur d’Alene Lake Management Plan* will be published. At that time, the task of implementing the plan will begin in earnest. The plan outlines a five-year implementation budget. Obtaining adequate funding from a variety of sources to support implementation will be a crucial first step.

Staff from the Tribe and DEQ will create a collaborative “implementation team” to begin implementing the plan. Water quality monitoring and modeling will continue to help guide implementation. Completion of tasks identified in the management action tables will be tracked and subsequently evaluated based on water quality data. Further implementation will occur progressively, with available funding.

Protecting the lake’s water quality will depend upon partnerships among governments and the public. While authority to manage the lake’s water quality rests with tribal, state, and federal governments, authority to manage activities around the basin that impact water quality is often the responsibility of local governments. Support from business organizations, environmental groups, and residents and visitors is also essential.